Module - The Watch Out Situations

Overview

Students will understand the significance of watchout situations and be able to apply that knowledge in classroom scenarios as well as incidents.

Exercise

In small groups students will identify the watchouts contained in the following scenarios. Use the Google Earth maps and your IRPG to work through the exercise.

Scenario 1: You are on a 4 person engine investigating a smoke report in the Cliff Creek drainage and are to suppress the fire when you find it. The fire is on the backside of a 2000 foot ridge and can't be seen directly. There is continuous regrowth all along the drainage, fuels are very dry, ladder fuels are present, thick stands of jackstrawed lodgepole are present along the route to the fire, pockets of cured tall grass occur regularly on the forest floor, moderate loading of dead and down fuels exist, slopes are 40 degrees. It will take 40 minutes to hike in. The temperature is 84 degrees and the RH is 19%, the winds are shifty and gusty, it is 1030.

The smoke from the fire blackens and gets larger, as you top the ridge you see the fire on the backside of the ridge 500 feet downslope, an acre of jackstrawed lodgepole pine burning, heavy dead and down fuels are being consumed, and continuous fuels extend from the fire to you. It is a dirty burn and there is no visible safety zone, 1000 hour fuels inside the fire perimeter are actively burning with occasional torching present. See next page.

Using the scenario, identify the **Watchouts** by putting a Y or N in the **Watchouts** present column. If you answered Y, indicate which **Fire Order** number(s) could be used to mitigate.

Watchouts	Watchout present ? Y/N	Fire order #(s) to mitigate
1. Fire not scouted and sized up.		
2. In country not seen in daylight.		
3. Safety zones and escape routes not identified.		
4. Unfamiliar with weather and local factors influencing fire behavior		
5. Uninformed on strategy, tactics, and hazards.		
6. Instructions and assignments not clear.		
7. No communication link between crewmembers and supervisors		
8. Constructing line without safe anchor point.		
9. Building line downhill with fire below.		
10. Attempting frontal assault on fire.		
11. Unburned fuel between you and the fire.		
12. Cannot see main fire, not in contact with anyone who can.		
13. On a hillside where rolling material can ignite fuel below.		
14. Weather gets hotter and drier.		
15. Wind increases and/or changes direction.		
16. Getting frequent spot fires across line.		
17. Terrain or fuels make escape to safety zones difficult.		
18. Feel like taking a nap near fireline.		

Scenario 2: You are in northwestern Colorado on a fire on a T2IA crew and you and your swamper are assigned to proceed in advance of the T2IA crew and are to fell hazard trees along the proposed fireline. You have never been here before under these conditions. The overstory is predominately fir and beetlekill lodgepole pine with ladder fuels, ground fuels are abundant and brush density is moderate, fine fuels are completely cured out, slopes are moderate. You are mid-slope on a 1500 foot slope and the fire is backing down, your section of line is approximately 1/2 of a mile long and will tie into a scree slope, the brush thickens steadily below you towards the bottom of the drainage, the safety zone is a mile back down the trail you took in to the fire, the black has large sections of incomplete burn within it. It is 0900 and temperature is 86 degrees, RH is 12%, winds are variable and gusty, everything crackles when you touch or step on it.

It is now 1300 and you have reached the tie in point on the scree slope, the lookout spinning weather reports temperatures of 95 degrees and an RH of 8%, winds are increasing, but are swirling within the drainage producing erratic but active fire behavior, the crew is still a third mile away and progressing slowly, you decide to sit down and eat a bean and take stock of the situation. Your swamper is snoozing away by this time. There are small patches of the unfamiliar local brush upslope from you that are virtually exploding when the fire hits it producing spectacular ember showers around it, it is the same type of brush that extends in a solid carpet

from where you are to the bottom of the drainage, the fire edge is 200 feet upslope from the edge of the thick brush and still backing down, the scree slope is not big enough for a safety zone.

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